



**U.S. Department of State**  
**Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs**  
**Private Sector Exchange**



February 15, 2023

Dear Scholar:

Welcome to the U.S. Department of State's BridgeUSA Exchange Visitor Program! This is the start of an exciting adventure. During your time in the United States, you will engage in research, teaching and lecturing with your American colleagues. You will make friendships that will last a lifetime and partake in American traditions. Since 1949, thousands of scholars from around the world have come to share their language, culture, and customs with their American colleagues and the broader local community. Your participation in this exchange program fosters a greater understanding between our two countries and works towards peaceful relations throughout the world.

We want you to have a meaningful and successful experience. We hope you learn about American customs, values, and culture, and build strong relationships with your new colleagues, fellow scholars and professors, instructors, and friends. As exciting and enriching as international exchange can be, it may present challenges. The Department of State's concern for your health, safety, and welfare includes your mental health. There are many resources available to help deal with mental health issues. Please reach-out to <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/get-help/immediate-help> for immediate help. BridgeUSA also has other available resources on our website, [www.j1visa.state.gov](http://www.j1visa.state.gov), for you to check out.

Your U.S. sponsor is your first point of contact throughout your stay in the United States. Their information is identified on your Form DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Program (J-1) Status. If you have any questions about your exchange program, need assistance of any kind while you are here, or if something just does not feel right, immediately contact your U.S. sponsor. It is their responsibility to help you with any problems, needs, or concerns you may have. Their emergency telephone contact number can be found in your program orientation materials and identification card, and is available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you have concerns and/or issues that your U.S. sponsor has not resolved, or you find you cannot reach your sponsor, please contact the Department of State through our J-1 Visa Emergency Helpline 1-866-283-9090, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or by e-mail at [JVisas@state.gov](mailto:JVisas@state.gov). Your sponsor and the Department of State are here to ensure your success and safety on the program.

We are pleased that you made the decision to study in the United States and hope you enjoy your stay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen S. Ward".

Karen S. Ward  
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary  
for Private Sector Exchange